

Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge

Proposed Land Protection Plan

Photo by Carl Galie



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Welcome and Good Evening

Information Session Agenda

- Introductions
- Purpose of Session
- Background on USFWS
- Project Overview
- Your Participation



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Purposes of Session

- Provide background information on the Service and this proposal
- Outline planning and realty processes
- Listen and record your issues or concerns with the proposal
- Respond to questions and concerns



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Thank You for Your Kind Attention, Courtesy, and Patience

All Comments, Ideas, and Concerns are
Welcome.

- We are all here to learn.
- Everyone should feel free to share their thoughts.
- Take advantage of opportunities to learn something new or see something from a different perspective.
- Please help maintain an atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable and welcome, regardless of his or her position.

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Background Information



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National Wildlife Refuge System

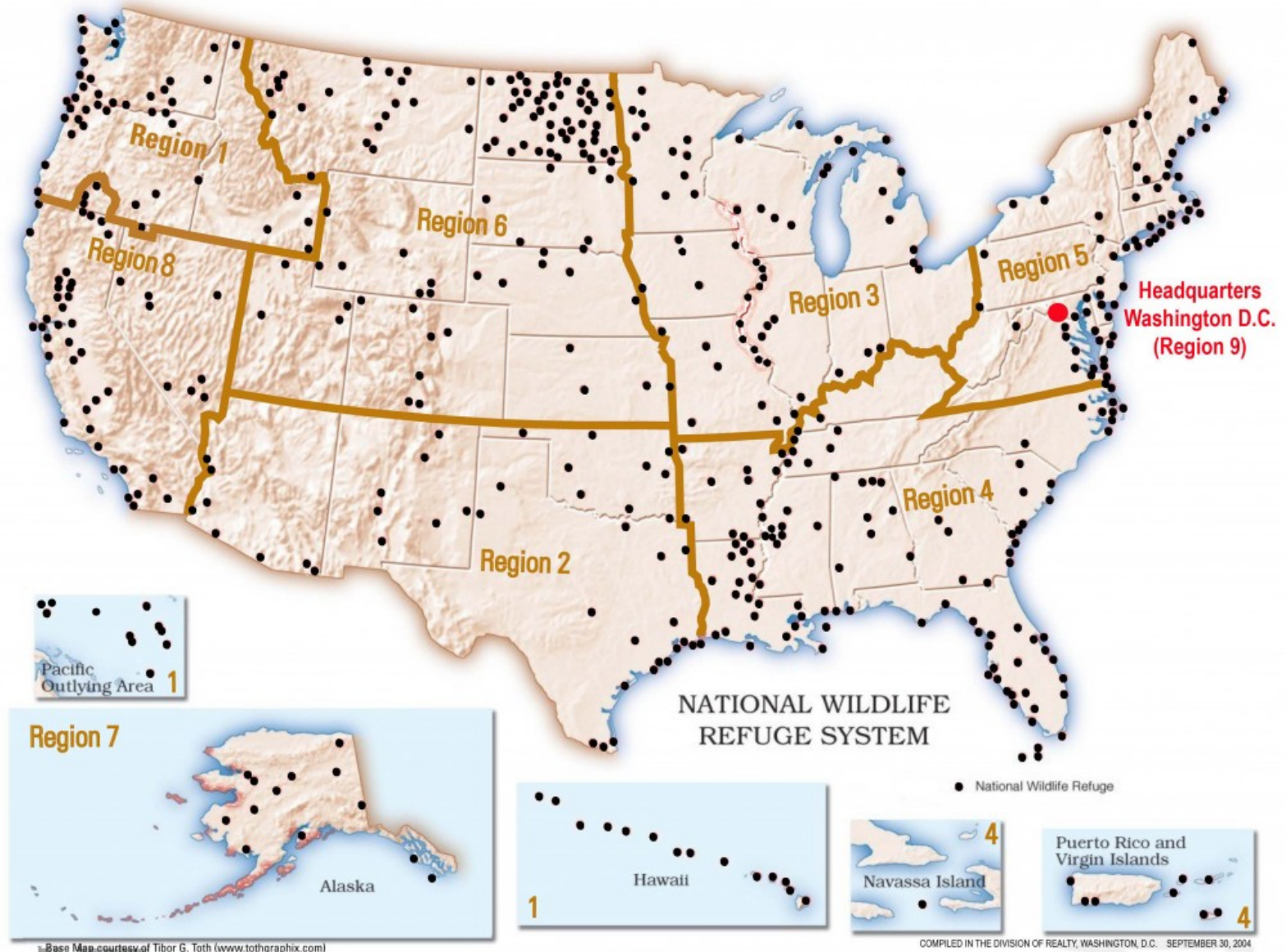
- First refuge - Pelican Island, Florida
 - Established by Teddy Roosevelt in 1903
 - Protection from plume hunters
- Today:
 - 566 National Wildlife Refuges
 - 150 million acres
 - Refuge in each State and some US Territories
 - More than 40 million visitors per year



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The National Wildlife Refuges



National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997

- Service mission is “wildlife first”
- Recreation must be compatible
- Manage as a System
- Manage for future generations
- Identifies priority public uses

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What are those public uses?



- Hunting
- Fishing
- Wildlife Observation
- Environmental Education
- Interpretation
- Wildlife Photography



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The Roanoke River

The Roanoke River is a 442-mile-long river with 9,875 square miles of drainage in North Carolina and Virginia.

This project focuses on the lower reach of the river.



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Important Features of the Roanoke River

The area along the Roanoke River is a mosaic of habitat types, the largest components include agricultural property, hardwood forest communities, tupelo-cypress forest, and stands of mature and young pine forests.

The Roanoke River floodplain provides habitat for many species including:



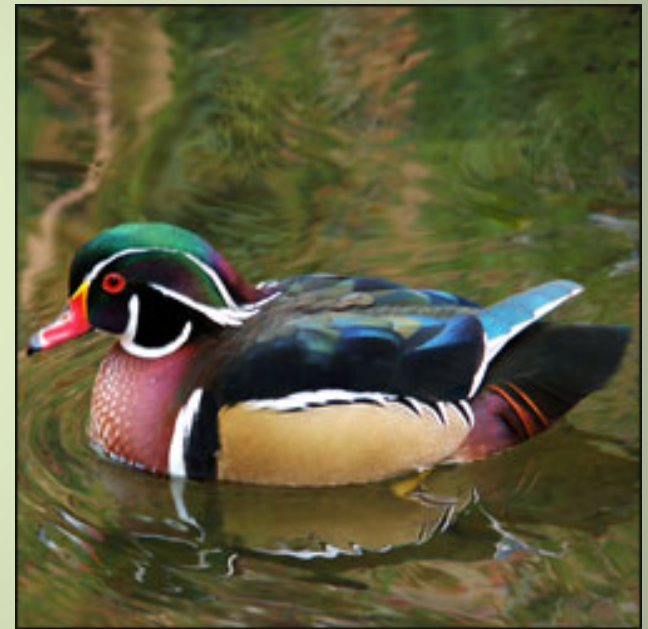
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Important Features of the Roanoke River



- Migratory waterfowl, primarily mallards and wood ducks;



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Important Features of the Roanoke River

- One of the largest populations of wild turkey in N.C.;



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Important Features of the Roanoke River



- Several active heron rookeries;



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Important Features of the Roanoke River



- Important forest dwelling birds including bald eagles, Swainson's warbler, Kentucky warbler, wood thrush, Mississippi and Swallow-tailed kites, prothonotary warbler and cerulean warbler;



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Important Features of the Roanoke River

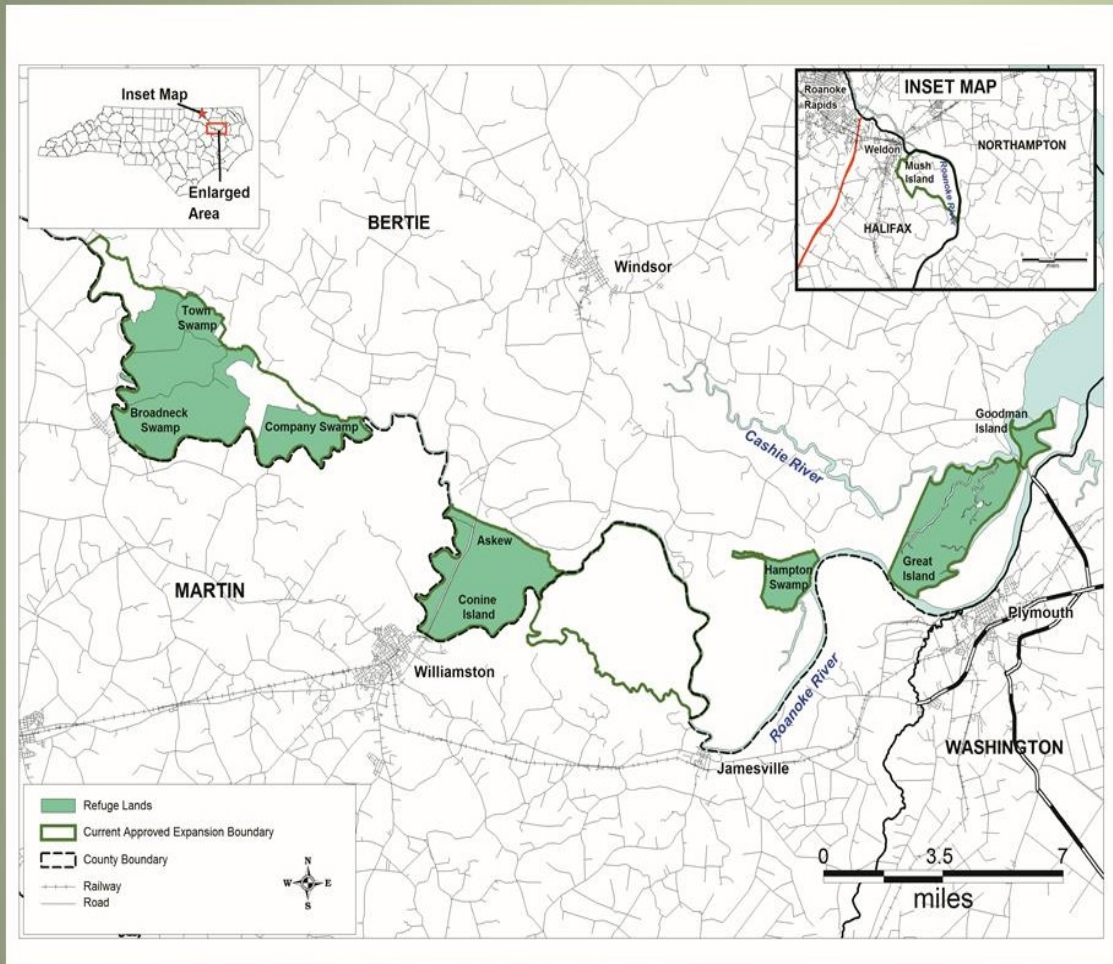
- Important to migratory diadromous fish species including alewife, American eel, American shad, Atlantic sturgeon, blueback herring, hickory shad, sea lamprey, and striped bass.



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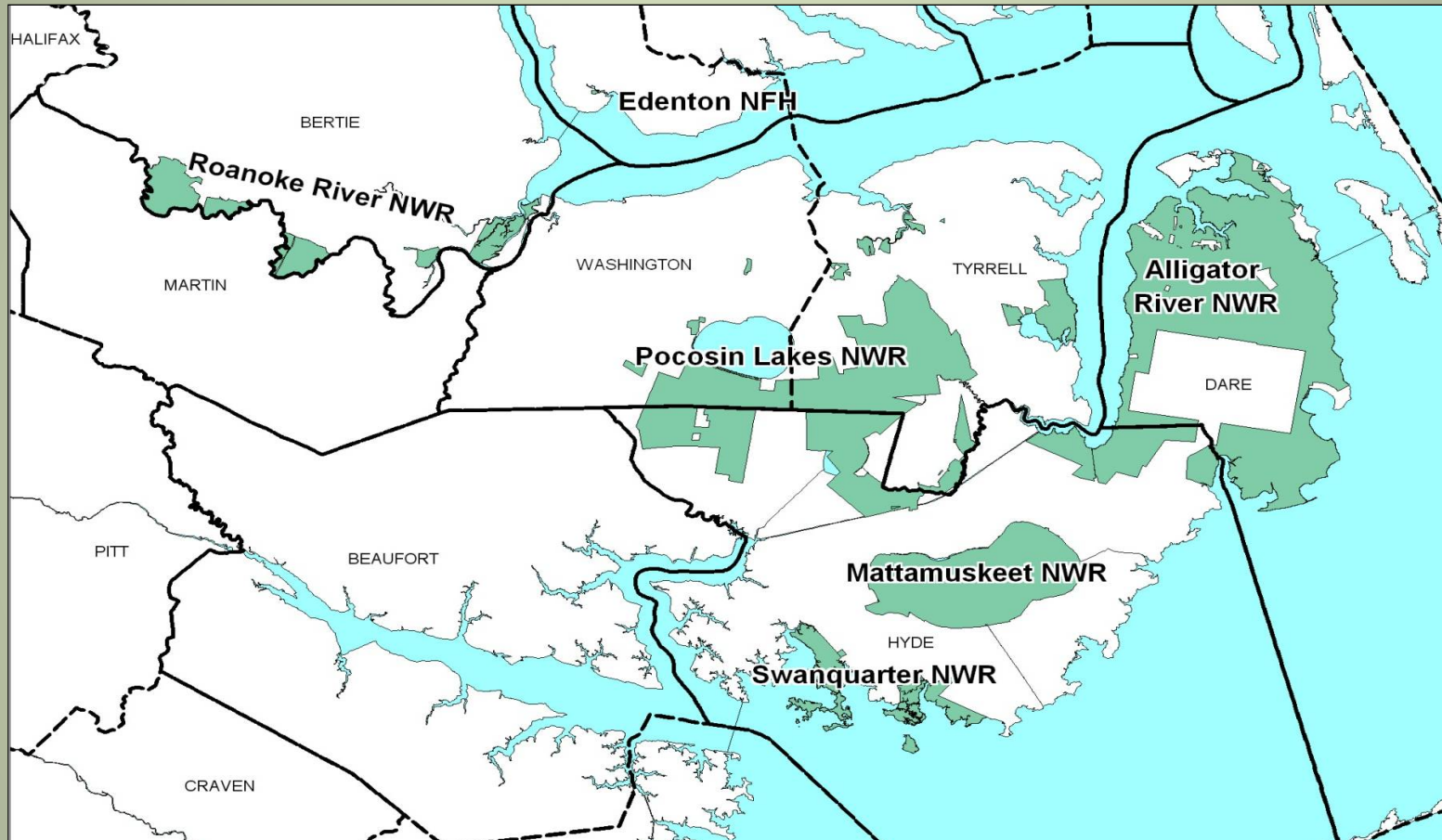
Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge



Established
August 10, 1989

Located in
Bertie County,
NC includes
20,978 acres
along the
southern extent
of the Roanoke
River

National Wildlife Refuges on the Albemarle-Pamlico Peninsula



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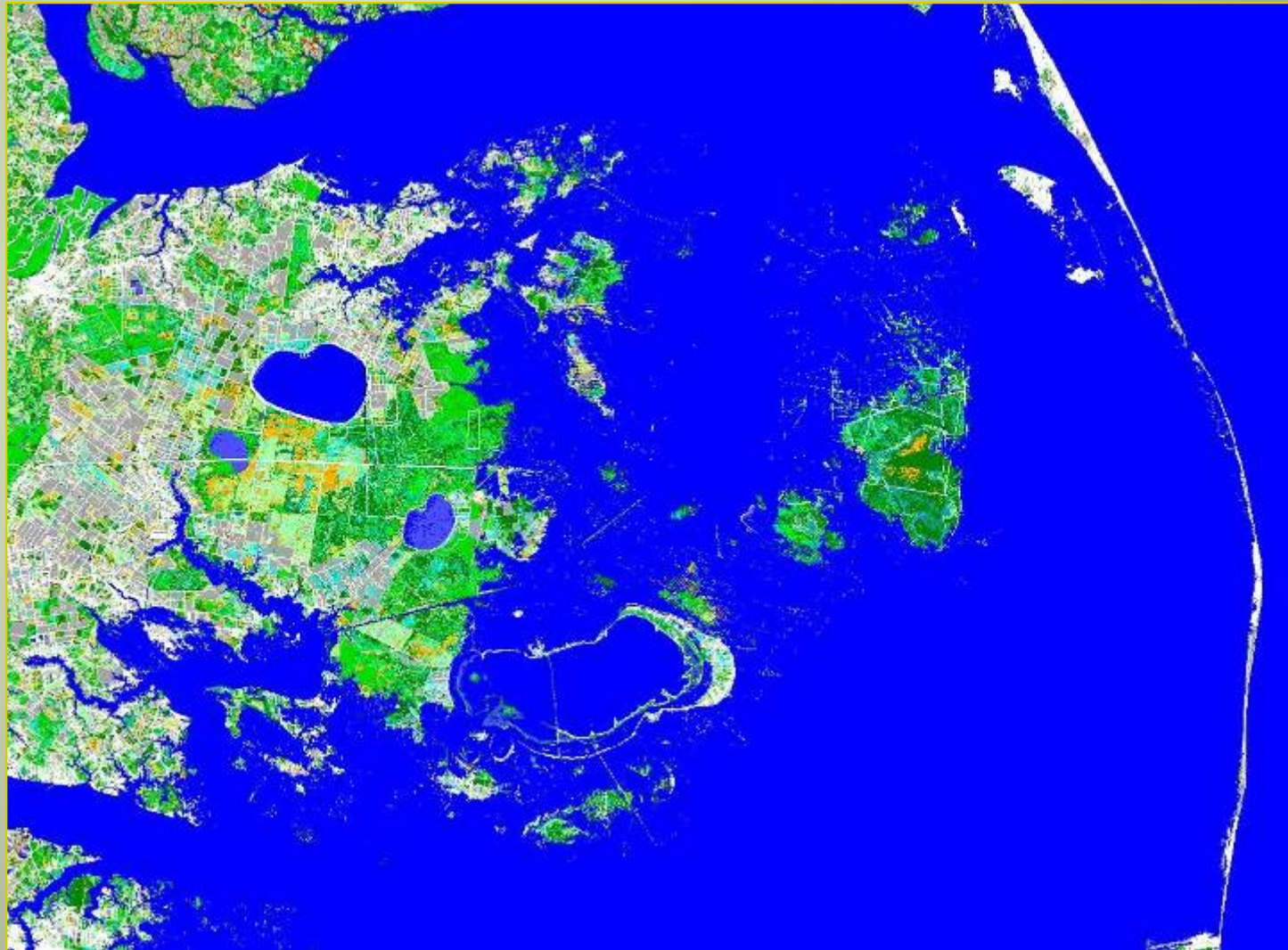
Over 1 million acres will be inundated as sea-level rises over the next few centuries

Sea Level Rise Simulation:
Shows increases in 4 inch increments up to 32 inches.

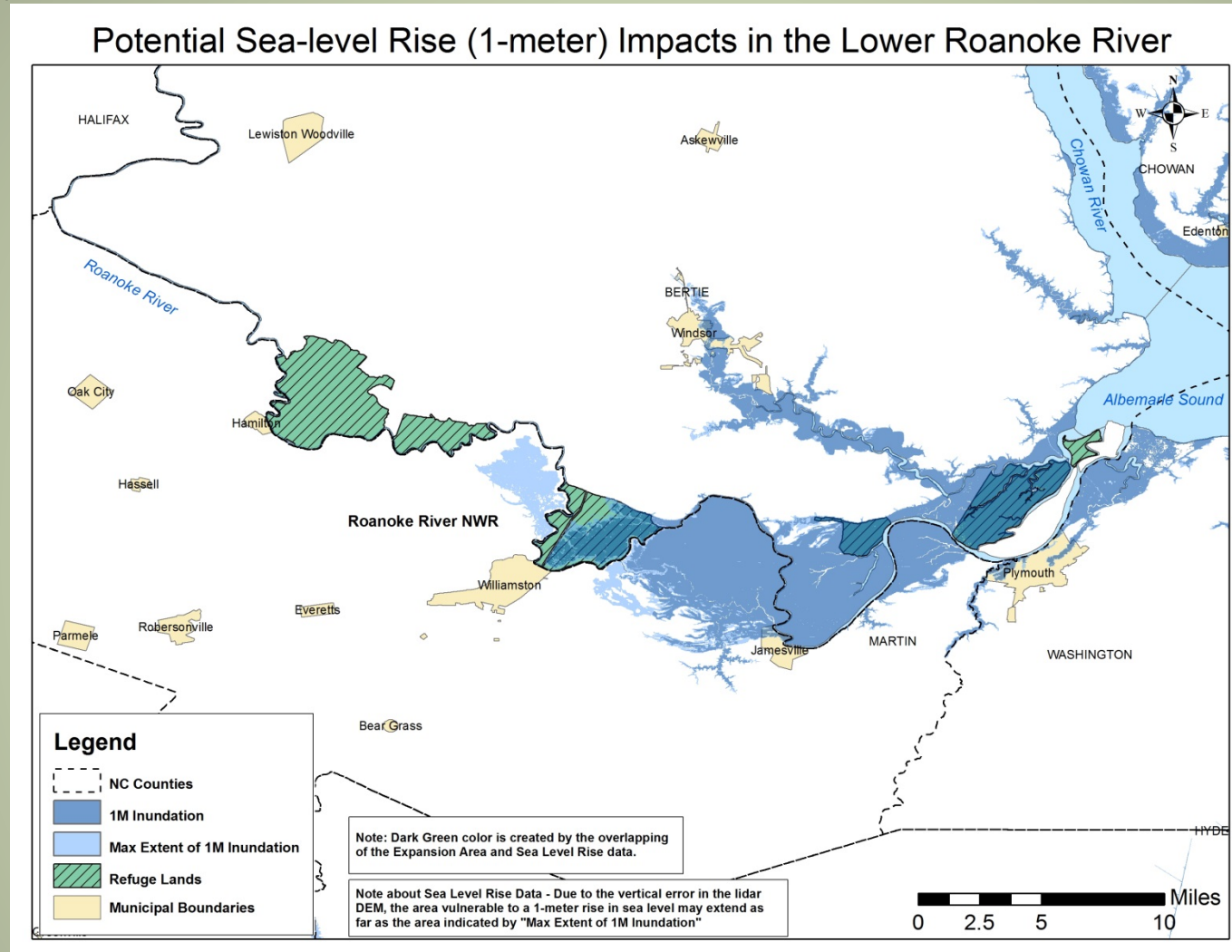
Estimates of how long this will take vary.

Current rate = 200 years

Fastest case = 150 years



Projected 1 meter sea-level rise in next 100 years

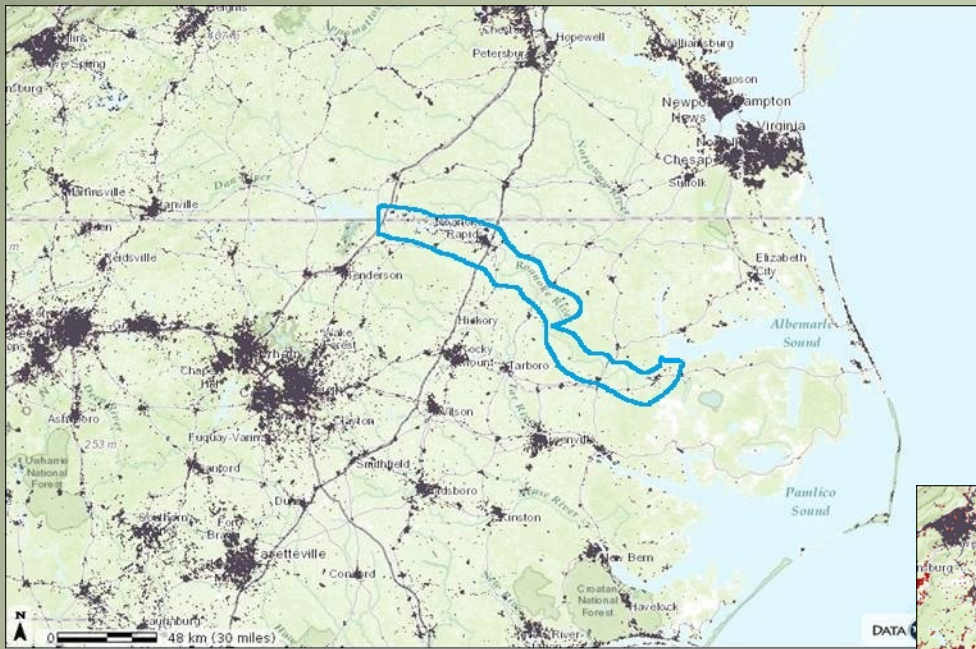


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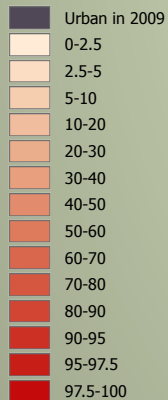
Projected Urban Growth

2009

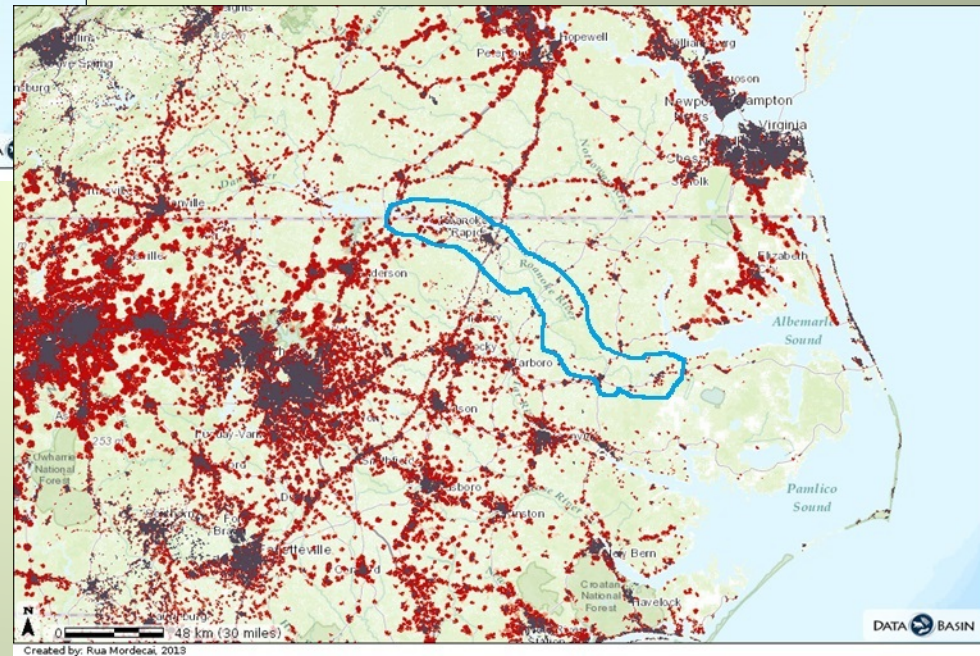


Legend

Probability of Urbanization in 2100



2100



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What Exactly Are We Proposing And Why

We are recognizing that the entire lower reach of the Roanoke River is important to wildlife and the people of the region.

Pressures from sea-level rise and projected urban growth will result in less habitat for wildlife and more stress placed on the habitat left.

The Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge can help to protect and sustain the health of the Roanoke River.

Right now, land owners **do not** have the option to donate, sell or enter into partnerships with the refuge along most of the Roanoke River. The Proposed Conservation Partnership Area will expand the options and opportunities of land owners and the refuge.

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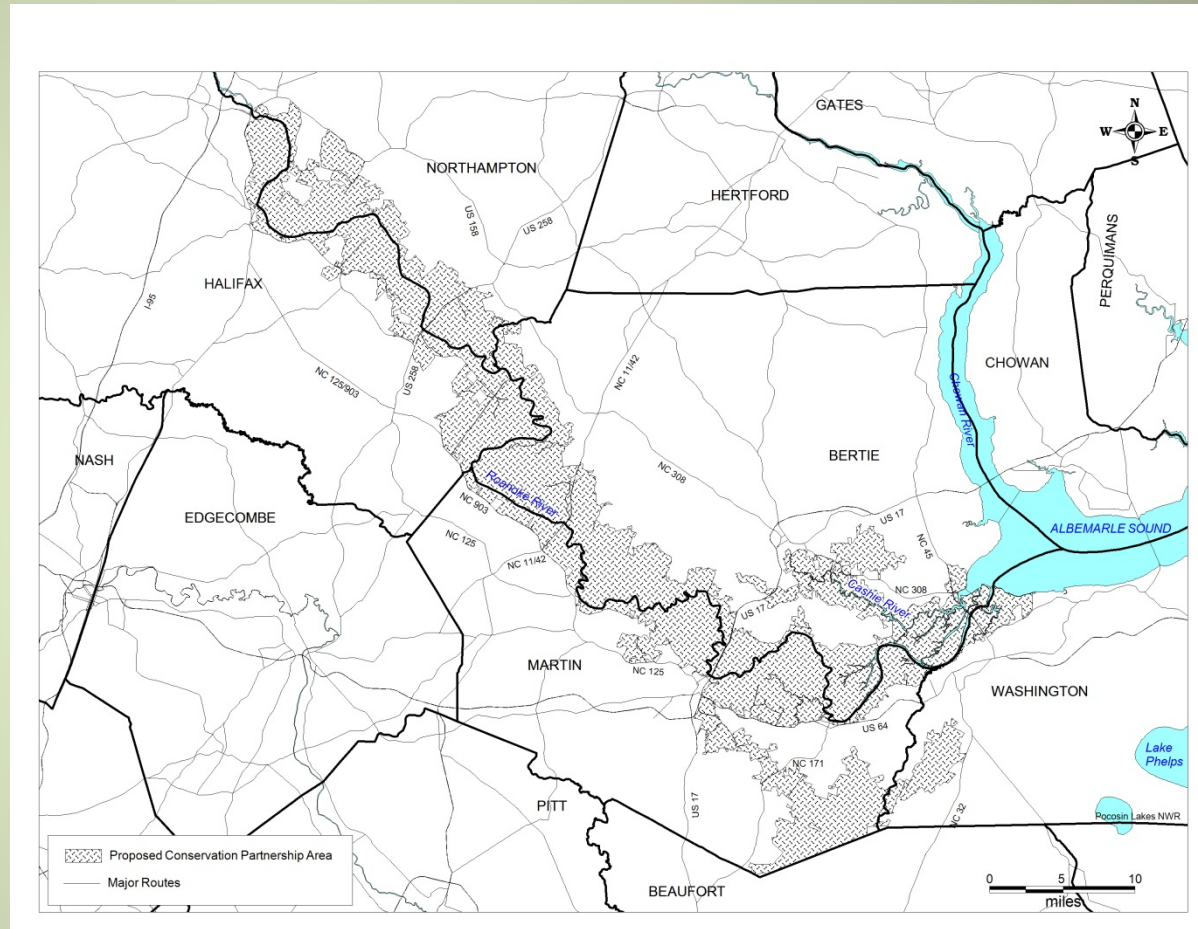


Proposed Conservation Partnership Area

The Proposed Conservation Partnership Area follows the course of the lower Roanoke River. It is derived from selecting parcels of land that either partially or completely fall within the footprint of a 35,000 ft³/second flood from the J.H. Kerr Dam.

The area covers the existing Roanoke River NWR, other conservation areas, and private lands along the river.

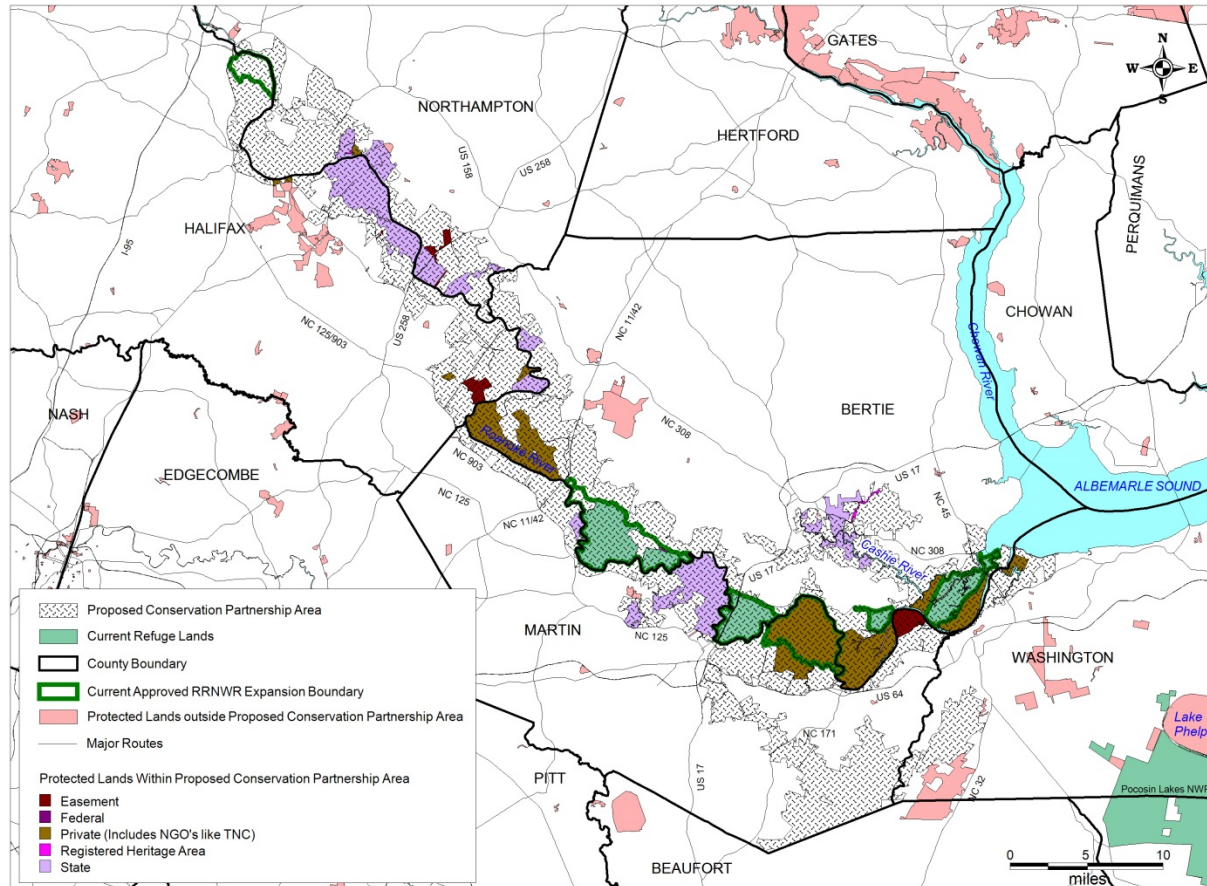
Simply highlights an area that is especially important for wildlife.



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Areas Currently in Conservation within the Proposed Conservation Partnership Area



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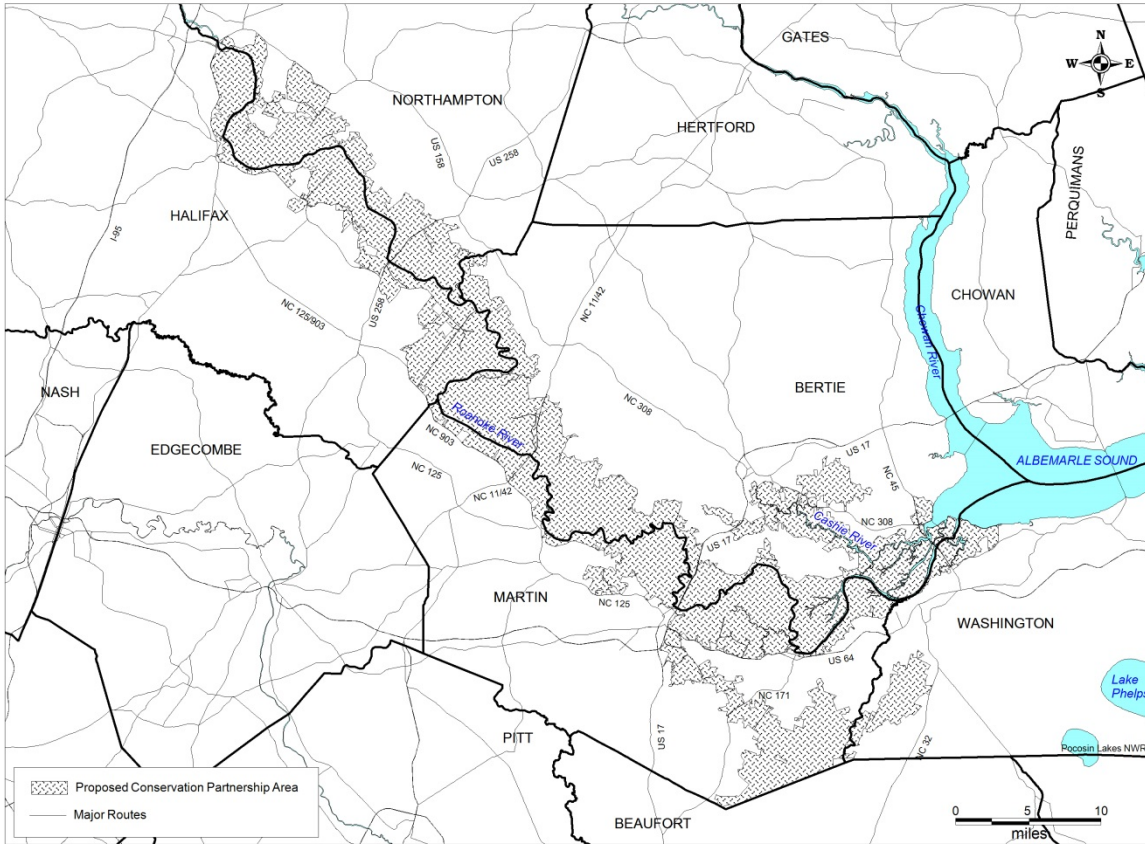


Conservation Design

Lands are prioritized by location and significance to wildlife.

The Service is limited to fee-title purchase of no more than a total of 50,000 acres within the Proposed Conservation Partnership Area (CPA).

The Service is limited to easements and cooperative agreements on no more than 100,000 acres within the Proposed CPA.



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What does fee-title mean?

Fee-title is absolute title to land, free of any conditions, limitations, restrictions, or other claims against the title, unless an indication to impose conditions or limitations is clearly stated.

What are conservation easements?

- Conservation easements limit certain types of uses or prevent development in perpetuity, while the underlying fee-title remains in private ownership.
- Individually tailored to meet a landowner's needs while fulfilling specific conservation needs.
- Taxes may be reduced in the future based on owner retained use.



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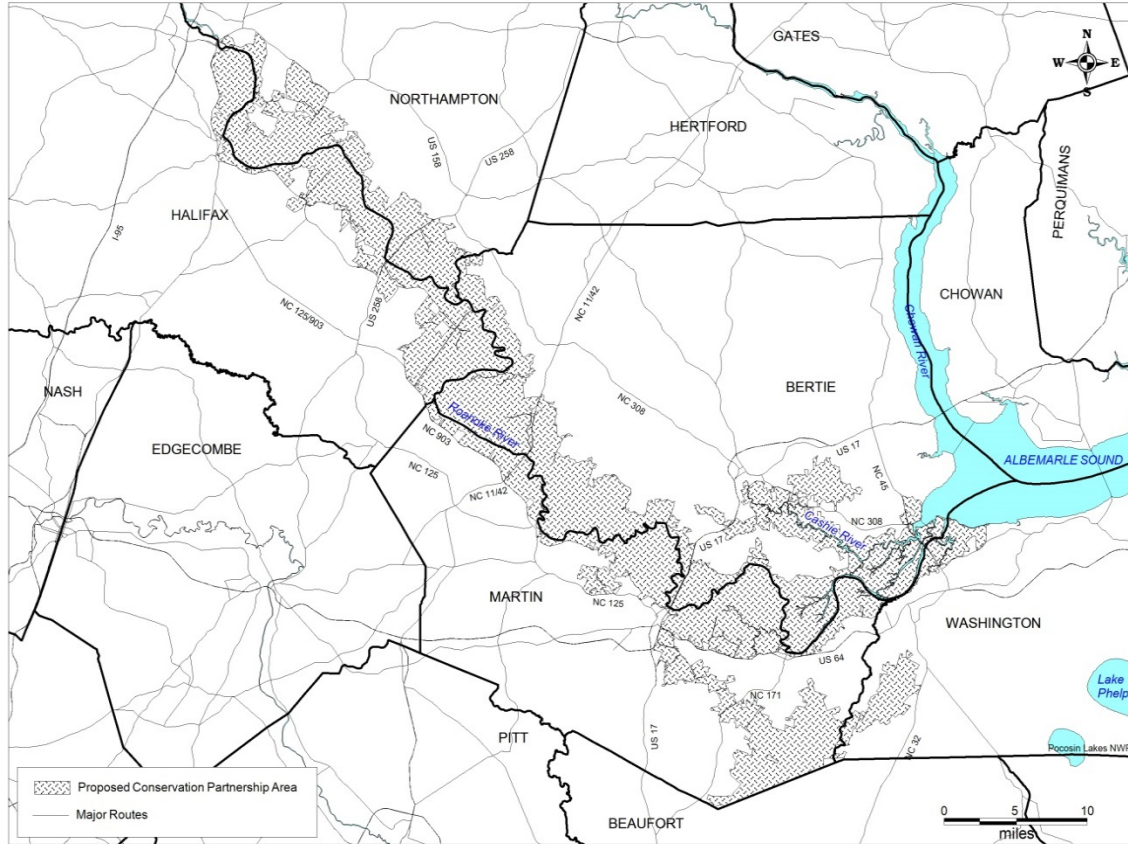


What does this mean to you?

- You still farm, hunt, fish or whatever you currently do on your land.
- You may keep or sell **all or part** of your land to anyone you choose, just like now.

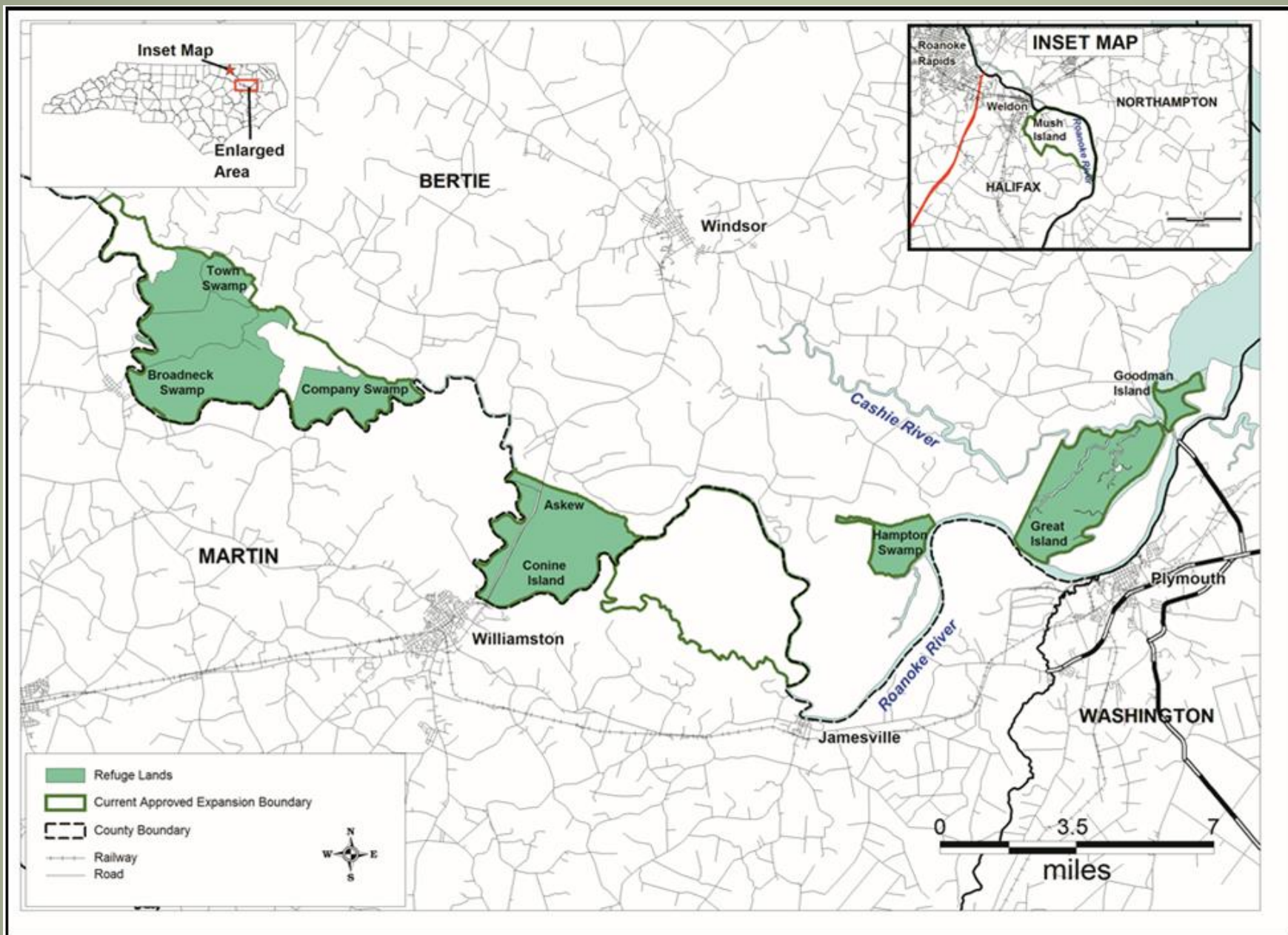
However NOW you may also:

- Sell a conservation easement to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Enter into a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for certain purposes.
- Sell your land to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service if you choose.



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How does this affect what I do on my property?

The Service's policy is to work with willing sellers only.

Nothing changes for you, unless:

- You sell some or all of your property to the Service. Then the Service manages the land much like Roanoke River NWR is managed now.

Or

- You sell a conservation easement on some or all of your property to the Service. Then, depending on the easement, those uses would be managed by the Service as part of Roanoke River NWR.

Or

- You enter into a cooperative agreement on some or all of your property with the Service for a purpose that is agreeable to you and the Service. Then you share responsibilities on your land for the specific purposes outlined in the agreement.

You still choose if you want to sell your land, who you wish to sell to, and what you do on your property.



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Will federal ownership affect adjoining landowners?

- No
- Service will have no authority on adjoining lands
- May increase values of adjacent properties



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Will Service acquire lands through eminent domain?

- No
- Service will use no adverse action to 'take' land from landowners
- Service will incorporate language in the Land Protection Plan to specify this



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What about hunting and fishing?

- Your rights to hunt and fish on your property are not affected by its inclusion in the Conservation Partnership Area.
- You can still use or lease your property for use by others.
- Current laws and regulations regarding hunting and fishing will still apply to your property.
- **IF** you choose to sell your property or an interest in your property to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the property would be managed much like the Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge is now.
- National Wildlife Refuges typically allow for hunting, fishing, wildlife photography, wildlife observation, interpretation and environmental education as long as they do not interfere with the purposes for which the refuge was established.



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What about the loss of tax revenue to the County?

- As an agency of the U. S. Government, the Service, like city, township, county and state governments, is exempt from taxation.
- The Refuge Revenue Sharing Act allows the Service to offset the tax losses by annually paying each county an amount that often equals or exceeds that which would have been collected from taxes if the land was left in private ownership.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service makes Refuge Revenue Sharing Payments **and** Payments in Lieu of Taxes.



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How Are the Payments Calculated?

- The **Refuge Revenue Sharing Act**, as amended, requires that payments be made to counties, for all land purchased by the Service in fee title. These payments will be based on the **greatest** of:
 - ❖ $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1 percent of the fair market value, or
 - ❖ 25 percent of the net receipts collected for products or services on the land , or
 - ❖ 75 cents per acre
- **Payment In Lieu of Taxes** is paid to Counties on land that was public land before becoming part of the Refuge and had never been private land. It is calculated based on 25% of the net receipts collected from this public domain land.



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Recent History of USFWS Payments to Bertie County 2007 - 2015

Year	Acres	Assessment	Payment	% of Due
2007	21,062	\$13,337,000	\$41,669	41.66%
2008	21,062	\$13,337,000	\$32,329	32.32%
2009	21,062	\$16,470,000	\$37,515	30.37%
2010	21,062	\$16,470,000	\$26,433	21.40%
2011	20,562	\$16,470,000	\$28,326	22.93%
2012	20,562	\$16,470,000	\$26,617	21.55%
2013	20,562	\$27,750,000	\$52,632	25.29%
2014	20,562	\$27,750,000	\$49,262	23.67%
2015	20,562	\$27,750,000	\$51,794	24.88%



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Where does the money for payments come from?

- Money for these payments comes from the income the Service receives from products or privileges like timber sales, grazing fees, or right-of-way permit fees from all refuges.
- Payments are made based on the fair market value of all lands owned in fee title by the Service within each respective county.
- If the annual receipts and funding are not sufficient for a 100% distribution, each county will receive a proportional share based on the national funding available each year.
- If receipts are not sufficient Congress is authorized to appropriate funds for this purpose.



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More Facts About USFWS Payments

- In North Carolina private lands are assessed on present use which may qualify the landowner for a reduced tax bill based on a present use tax deferral. Uses such as agriculture, horticulture, and forestry can qualify under this program.
- Reductions or deferrals for current use does not apply to Service owned lands. The Refuge Revenue Sharing Payment is based on the full market value not a use value.
- Assessments on Service owned lands will change just like the assessments on your local tax rolls change. The Service reappraises the market value of these areas at least once every 5 years.
- Payments In Lieu of Taxes are made on Public Domain Lands that have never been in private ownership and have never generated tax in the past.
- There are no restrictions on how the county may use this money. The money may be used for any governmental purpose.



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Economic Impacts of National Wildlife Refuges

- Nationwide 46.5 million people visited National Wildlife Refuges in 2011.
- These visitors generated \$2.4 Billion in sales for regional economies.
- Non-residents accounted for 77% of expenditures by visitors.
- Refuge recreational spending generated about \$342.9 million in tax revenue at the local, county, state and Federal level. Not including refuge revenue sharing or payment in lieu of taxes.
- The southeast had the highest visitation of any area in the country.
- 72% of spending was on recreation that was non-consumptive.

USFWS Banking on Nature 2013



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Regional Refuge Economic Impacts

Alligator River NWR

Total Visitors in 2011 - 51,793

Non-Residents - 24,412

Residents - 27,381

Total Visitor Expenditures - \$1,339,600

Total Tax and Revenue - \$174,300

Pea Island NWR

Total Visitors in 2011 - 603,150

Non-Residents - 362,755

Residents - 240,395

Total Visitor Expenditures - \$16,208,300

Total Tax and Revenue - \$2,928,000

Pocosin Lakes NWR

Total Visitors in 2011 - 70,150

Non-Residents - 42,305

Residents - 27,845

Total Visitor Expenditures - \$1,988,700

Total Tax and Revenue - \$311,000

USFWS Banking on Nature 2013

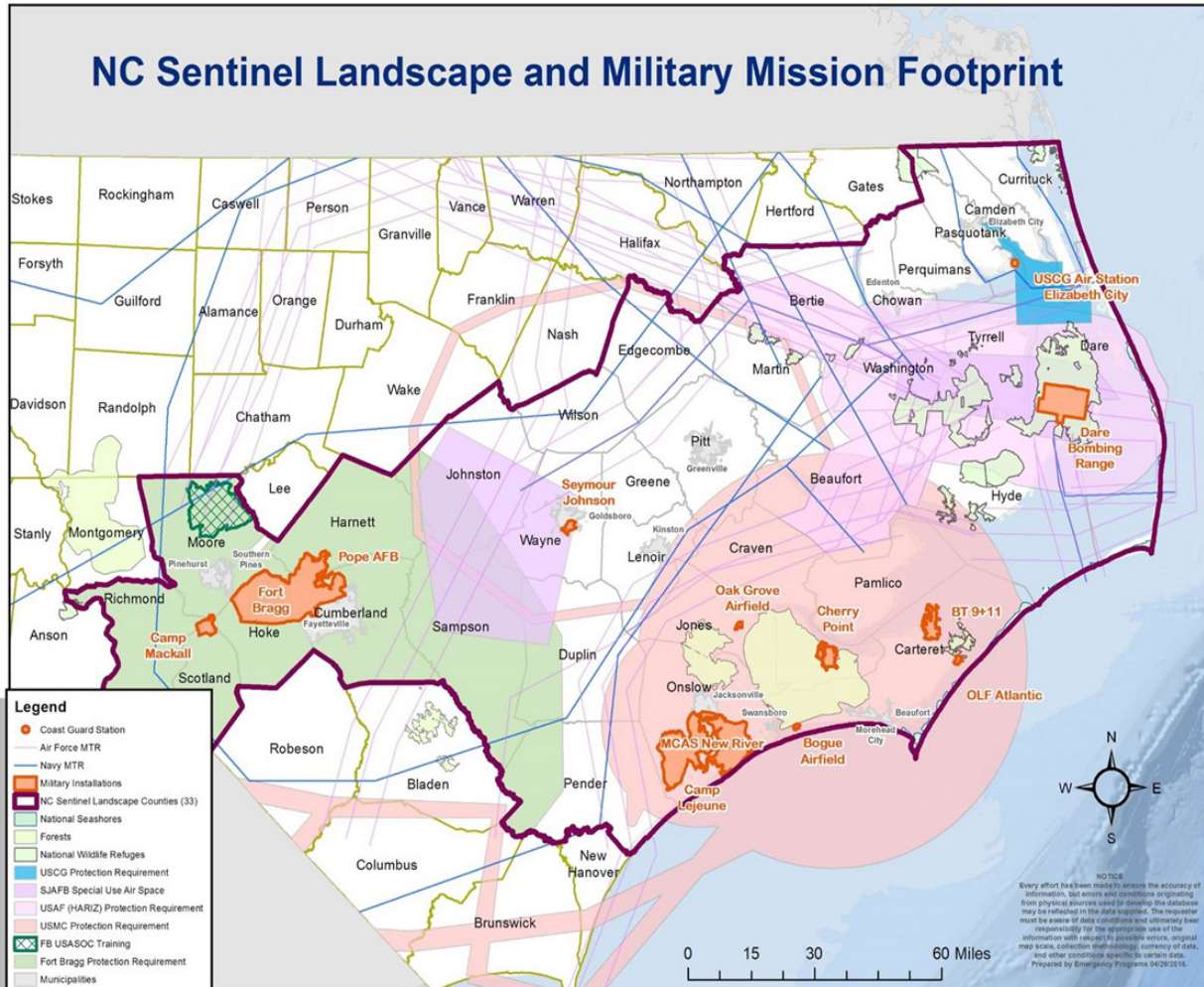


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Sentinel Landscape Partnership

NC Sentinel Landscape and Military Mission Footprint



- Partnership DoI, USDA, DoD
- Preserve Rural Character
- Maintain Readiness
- \$38 Million
- www.sentinellandscapes.org

Balancing Nature and Commerce in Northeastern North Carolina “Connecting Our Region”

What is the Northeastern North Carolina Balancing Nature & Commerce Initiative

Purpose:

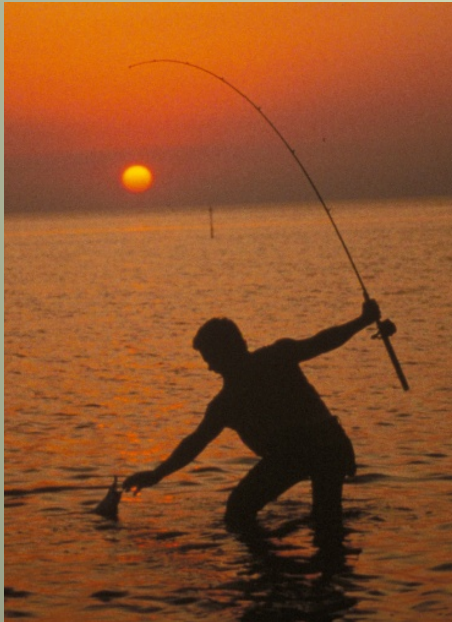
Cultivate the creation of a regional identity that fosters sustainable economic development and regional partnerships and builds awareness of the value of the Region’s assets

- 6 Action Plans were developed by over 80 participants in a regional workshop held in October, 2015 focused on developing ecotourism in the region.
- The Albemarle Commission, Region R’s Council of Government was selected as the Program Manager for the Initiative
- Agreement to develop a Regional Identity and work across county lines whenever possible to grow ecotourism and support services.



Balancing Nature and Commerce in Northeastern North Carolina Initial 6 Projects

1. Develop a Regional Brand
2. Connecting Communities – Technology Infrastructure Across the Region
5. Regional Map of Paddle Trails and Water Access Points



4. Collaborate to improve water quality/accessibility, maintenance of waterways in order to attract users.
5. Promote Cultural and Heritage Tourism
6. Clean Water, Clean Air, Clean Living – Initially designed to attract professionals to locate to the area but is evolving more broadly into community outreach and education.

In summary:

- This is a proposal
- We are listening and attempting to address concerns and interest
- Suggestions and questions are helpful, welcome, and appreciated
- The draft plan will identify areas and methods of conservation



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What do we want from you?

Your input into the planning for this project is important

Your Comments

Your Questions

Your Concerns



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